

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

SEP 21 2007

J. Wayne Leonard
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Entergy
3400 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70119

Dear Mr. Leonard:

We are seriously troubled by the events that occurred at the Vermont Yankee power plant on August 21, 2007, when a portion of one of the cooling tower cells collapsed, as well as subsequent events that happened on August 30, 2007. Our constituents are understandably alarmed, and have raised numerous concerns about the 35-year old plant.

It is our understanding that the cooling tower that collapsed did not serve in a safety-related capacity, and was therefore not subject to inspections by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). The lack of oversight certainly raises questions about the adequacy of NRC's Reactor Oversight Process (ROP). We continue to have many questions regarding the events leading up to the cooling tower collapse on August 21, 2007 and the August 30, 2007 shutdown.

While some of our questions have been answered during a briefing given by Brian Cosgrove (Manager of Government Affairs, Vermont Yankee) on September 17, 2007, we would like written responses to the following, all of which relate to issues of safety, protocol and communications:

1. Is Entergy required by state law or other permits to inspect all cooling towers on the site? How often are these cooling towers inspected and when was the last complete inspection conducted? What were the results of the last three inspections of the cooling towers? When was the last time that the other bank of cooling towers, Tower 1, was inspected?
2. What structural similarities exist between the collapsed cooling tower cell and other safety-related cells of the plant? Might the similarities in cells be indicative of problems in the safety-related cell? Please describe the work being performed on cell 2-1, the safety related cell, during the tour of the plant on September 12.
3. Describe the mid-1980's upgrade of the safety-related cell and the upgrade of the other cooling tower cells. What did the contractor recommend be done to strengthen and improve these cells? What did the previous owner of Vermont Yankee actually do to strengthen the towers and cell 2-4 in particular?
4. What other parts of the Vermont Yankee plant are not considered safety-related and thus, not inspected by the NRC?
5. What is now and what has been the schedule for periodic replacement of wooden structures exposed to hot water and other elements? Do other materials, for example steel, cement, or composites, last longer or provide greater structural integrity as compared to these wooden structures, based on manufacturers'

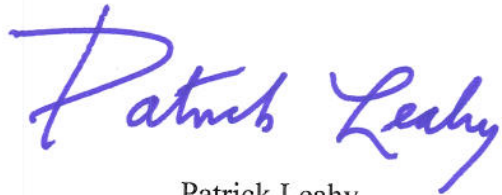
- guarantees and practical experience? What will the future replacement schedule be, if different?
6. How often is the pool of water located below the cooling towers drained for inspection of the timbers that sit in this water? Prior to the accident, when was the last time the pools were drained for inspection of the condition of the beams sitting in the water?
 7. What effect could the additional weight and additional vibration from the larger fans installed as part of the power uprate have had on the structural integrity of the cooling towers?
 8. To the best of your knowledge, what caused the collapse of cooling tower 2-4? Is the kind of wooden structure in cell 2-4 common in the industry, and if so, what warning is warranted for other facilities with similar structures? Does Entergy own or operate plants with similar wooden structures and if yes, in what states? After the August 21 collapse of the cooling tower cell 2-4, what level of inspection was conducted? Was that inspection of the same scope and detail as is annually conducted at the beginning and ending of the hot season, i.e., May 15 and November 15?
 9. VY General Plant Manager Bill Maguire issued a Red Memo dated August 28 which concluded that there was a "near miss of serious injury" to plant personnel that were inspecting the tower cell 2-4 on the day before the collapse. The personnel were walking on top of the cell which later collapsed. Since safety is your #1 priority, as mentioned in the memo, what procedure should Vermont Yankee have followed to make sure that all personnel were safe and why was that procedure not followed?
 10. During the August 30 event, workers took steps to fix a turbine stop valve that was stuck in the closed position. Describe the steps taken to get the valve to open and the associated procedural controls for those efforts.
 11. Were the steps workers took to repair the stuck valve in conformance with NRC's regulations and expectations? If not, what were the shortfalls?

Thank you for your attention to these matters. We look forward to your timely response to this letter.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Representative

cc: Governor James Douglas
Dale Klein, Chairman, Nuclear Regulatory Commission
David O'Brien, Commissioner, Vermont Department of Public Service
James Volz, Chair, Vermont Public Service Board
Michael Kansler, President and Chief Nuclear Officer, Entergy Nuclear
Ted Sullivan, Site Vice President, Vermont Yankee